

Scholars Corner – Issue 10
News, Reviews & Publications

Dame Mary Tanner (UK) *on some of the reasons that took her to Jerusalem and seeing the impact of the Second Intifada first hand.*



Dr. Gerald Gerbrandt (Canada) *and his involvement in negotiating establishing and subsequent leading of a newly formed merged university, (Canadian Mennonite University)*



Rev. Einar Hansen (Norway) *“Living Stones in the Holy Land – a meeting with Jesus believers in Israel and Palestine*



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Dame Mary Tanner

General Secretary of the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity

For 16 years I taught Old Testament and Hebrew. In 1966 I visited the Holy Land for the first time. I was researching the theme of Jerusalem in the book of Isaiah and I still recall my first glimpse of the City from the Mount of Olives. But gradually I was being drawn into ecumenical conversations: the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Anglican Roman Catholic International Commission. It wasn't easy to leave academia but my job, as the General Secretary of the Church of England's Council for Christian Unity; I came to see was the best job in the Church as I made friends across the divides of churches and worked on theological agreements that might contribute to the healing of Christian divisions. When I retired in 1998 I had an opportunity to come to Tantur to be part of the Scholars' Program and to teach a course on the Church and the ecumenical future. Arriving on September 19th I was bowled over by the beauty of the place and happy to be a member of the ecumenical community. There was enjoyment in those first evenings as a group of us walked into Bethlehem for a drink, excitedly talking about the day's lectures, the next day's visits, struggling all the time to understand the situation around us and what to do about Eucharistic celebrations. Then Ariel Sharon walked onto the Temple Mount. The tourists disappeared, the lights in Bethlehem went out, tracer bullets crossed the night sky from Gilo to Beth Jala. I came to understand at a deeper level something about the Church's vocation to be a sign to the world that there is a better way of living and loving in peace with justice. I saw more clearly that our Christian divisions weaken our witness and make us less credible and less effective. I've returned four times since then, as a member of the International Board; as one of the Presidents of the World Council of Churches to work with women in Bethlehem on the [Kairos Palestine Document](#); and to celebrate the 40th Anniversary of Tantur. Each time I am thankful for Tantur's ecumenical ministry of reconciliation and the opportunity it gives to those from different parts of the world to understand the cost of human division and the desperate need for the reconciliation of memories, for peace, peace with justice, in the Church and the world.

Dr. Gerald Gerbrandt

President Emeritus and Professor Emeritus of Bible
Canadian Mennonite University
Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada

As often happens to academics, after years of preparation for an academic career, I transferred into administration, serving for fifteen years as Academic Dean at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (CMBC).

At that point I became President of CMBC at a crucial time as the college was in conversation with two other colleges regarding a possible merger to form a small denominational university.

These negotiations were complex, as each institution fought to retain its own turf and identity, but eventually they were successful, with Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) the result. I then had the privilege of leading this infant university for its first 12 years, as a new identity was formed and old grudges overcome.

In the summer of 2012 I began a new stage of life, as I retired from administration and full-time work, and began to focus once more on the Old Testament, my earlier academic home. Our (my wife Esther and I) stay at Tantur was a wonderful part of that transition. It was a time away from family, friends and CMU. But more importantly it was time in the Holy Land, time in an ecumenical religious setting, and time in a library. My project was working on a commentary on Deuteronomy for the Believers Church Bible Commentary Series. Given the significance of the Promised Land for the book of Deuteronomy, it was heart-rending to work on it in that land which remains in so much conflict. Deuteronomy waxes eloquent with how wonderful and blessed the land is, but then continuously warns that life in the land will only be sustained if God is worshiped, and justice maintained. If only that were true of the land today.

Rev. Einar Hansen

Evangelical Lutheran Minister, Bardu, Norway

In 2011 Tantur Ecumenical Institute was delighted to have two ministers from the Lutheran Church of Norway to stay with us. While Tantur welcomes people from all over the world the vast majority of them come from the Anglo speaking world or those carrying out their studies in the Anglo sphere. So it was a great privilege to greet our guests from Norway.

Rev. Einar Hansen has been a minister of the Church of Norway since 1975 (Evangelical Lutheran). For the last 11 years he has been minister in a remote community in the north of Norway called Bardu and is no stranger to the Holy Land having stayed for several weeks in Jerusalem studying the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The idea to learn more about Christian believers in the Holy Land came to me after I had been a tour leader for Norwegian Groups to Israel/Palestine in 2011/2012. As pilgrims to the holy sites we became very familiar with "dead stones" of Jerusalem – the ruins of Old Buildings and so on. What about "the living stones"? I decided to find out how it was for the Jesus believers in the Holy Land today. For 5 weeks I had the pleasure to stay at Tantur from the middle of October 2012. During my stay I met Christians in Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Ramallah. Indeed, to get an overview of the many different Christian denominations, with many other religions crossing my path, was a big task. I had to choose a few of them; Protestantism (Evangelical Lutherans) in Bethlehem and Ramallah, The Armenians in The Old City of Jerusalem and the Messianic Jews

What made a strong impact on me was to hear about the daily challenges in Bethlehem and Ramallah. Bishop Awad of Bethlehem Bible College described the Occupation and its ongoing effects on the people off Bethlehem. "So far this year (he added) the Israeli Defence Forces have uprooted more than 7,500 of our Olive trees" The Christians are a small minority and often have to share the heavy burdens of all of the Palestinian people. He goes on to say. *We have to love our Jewish Brothers, Jesus has told us to do so, Is it not easy but we must love them. They too suffer in the situation which is today*" For the Armenians in the Old City, they are faced with a lot of challenges too. A trip around the Armenian quarter reveals how it is to be a Christian minority in that very Old City. *Our Jewish neighbours and the Israeli authorities want to have all the quarter. We are treated in a similar way as the Palestinians, the guide said. We must not forget them*" I therefore strongly feel that they need our prayers and love so future living stones can pass on the message of peace.